THE FORESTER'S DAUGHTER

A Romance of the Bear Tooth Range

By HAMLIN GARLAND

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Commence *******

"This is our ranch," she explained. "All the mendow in sight belongs to

The young easterner looked about in astoniahment. Not a tree bigger than sun dried bides littered the ground or bung upon the fence. Exteriorly the low cabin made a drab, depressing picture, but as he alighted, upon Berea's tavitation, and entered the house he was met by a sweet faced, brown haired little woman, in a neat gown, whose bearing was not in the least awkward or embarrassed.

"This is Mr. Norcross, the tourist I told you about," explained Berrie. Mrs. McFarlane extended her small hand with friendly impulse. "I'm very glad to meet you, sir. Are you going to spend some time at the mill?"

"I don't know. I have a letter to Mr. Meeker from a friend of mine who hunted with him last year-a Mr. Sut-

"Mr. Sutier! Oh, we know him very Won't you sit down?"

The interior of the house was not only well kept, but presented many evidences of refinement. A mechanical siane stood against the log wall, and sooks and magazines, dog eared with use. Iftered the table, and Norcross, feeling the force of Nash's half expressed criticism of his "superfor," listened intently to Mrs. McFarlane's apologies for the condition of the farm-

"Well," said Berea sharply, "if we're to reach Uncle Joe's for dinner we'd better be scratching the hills." And And to her mother she added, "I'll pull in about dark."

The mother offered no objection to her daughter's plan, and the young people rode off together directly toward the high peaks to the east.

> CHAPTER III. A Forester's Becret.

HE trail, hardly more than a wood road, grew wilder and loneller as they climbed. Cattle fed on the hillsides in scattered bands like elk. Here and there a small cable stood on the bank of a stream, but for the most part the trail mounted the high stopes in perfect solitude.

The girl talked easily and leisurely, reading the brands of the ranchers, re vealing the number of cattle they owned, quite as a young farmer would have done. She seemed not to be embarrassed in the slightest degree by the fact that she was guiding a strange man over a lonely road and gave no outward sign of special interest in him till she suddenly turned to ask, "What kind of a sticker-I mean a raincoatdid you bring?"

He looked blank, "I don't believe brought any. I've a leather shooting incket, however.'

She shrugged her shoulders and looked up at the sky. "We're in for a otorm. You'd ought 'o have a alleker, no fancy 'raincout,' but a real old fashioned cow puncher's oliskin. They make a business of shedding rain."

She rode on for a few minutes in al tence, as if disgusted with his folly, but she was really worrying about "Poor chap!" she said to herself. "He can't stand a chill. I ought to have thought of his slicker myself. He's belpless as a baby,'

They were climbing fast now, wind ing upward along the bank of a stream, and the sky had grown suddonly gray, and the woodland path was dark and chill. The mountains were not less beautiful, but they were decidedly less amiable, and the youth shivered, casting an apprehensive eye at the thickening clouds

Beren perceived something of his dis may and, drawing rein, dismounted Behind her middle was a tightly rolled bundle which, being untied and shaken out proved to be a horseman's rainproof oliskin coat. "Put this on!" she communded.

"Oh, no," he protested. "I can't take

"Yea you can! You must! Don't you worry about me. I'm used to weather Put this on over your jacket and all You'll need it. Rain won't hurt me.

but it will just about finish you." The worst of this lay in its truth and Norcross lost all his pride of sex for the moment. A wetting would not dim this girl's splendid color nor relince her vitality one degree, while to aim it might be a death warrant. You could throw me over my own " he admitted in a kind of bitter admiration and alipped the cost on shivering with cold as he did so.

"You think me a poor excuse for trailer, don't you?" he said ruefully as the thunder began to roll.

"You've got to be all made over new," she replied tolerantly. here a year and you'll be able to stand anything."

Remounting, she again led the way with cheery cry. The rain came dashing down in fitful, misty streams, but she merely pulled the rim of her sombrero closer over her eyes and rode steadily on, while he followed, plunged in gloom as cold and gray as the storm.

"These mountain showers don't last long," the girl called back, her face shining like a rose. "We'll get the sun found him?" in a few minutes."

And so it turned out. In less than an hour they rode into the warm light again, and in spite of himself Norcross sonked."

"I never take cold," she returned. "I'm used to all kinds of weather. Don't you bother about me."

Topping a low divide, the youth caught a glimpse of the range to the the gate with Norcross at her side. southeast, which took his breath. "Isn't that superb?" he exclaimed. "It's like the shining roof of the

"Yes, that's the Continental divide, she confirmed casually, but the lyrical note which he struck again reached his thumb gave shade. The gate of her heart. The men she knew had so the cattle corral stood but a few feet | few words for the beautiful in life. from the kitchen door, and rusty beef | She wondered whether this man's illhones, bleaching skulls and scraps of ness had given him this refinement or whether it was native to his kind. "I'm glad he took my coat," was her thought.

She pushed on down the slope, riding hard, but it was nearly 2 o'clock when they drew up at Meeker's house, which was a long, low, stone structure built along the north side of the road. The place was distinguished knew McFarlane's girl, but that every not merely by its masonry, but also by its picket fence, which had once been whitewashed. Farm wagons of various degrees of decay stood by the gate, and in the barnyard plows and harrows-deeply buried by the weedswere rusting foriornly away. A little farther up the stream the tall pipe of a sawmill rose above the firs.

A pack of dogs of all sixes and signs came clamoring to the fence, followed



by a big, slovenly dressed, red beard-

ed man of sixty or thereabouts. "Hello, Uncle Joe!" called the girl in offhand boytsh fashion. "How are ou today?"

"Howdy, girl," answered Meeker cavely. "What brings you up here gravely. this time?"

She laughed. "Here's a boarder who ants to learn how to raise cattle." Meeker's face lightened. "I reckon

ou're Mr. Norcross? I'm glad to see e. Light off and make yourself to home. Turn your horses into the corrat. The boys will feed 'em."

Without ceremony Meeker led his ruests directly into the dining room, long and rather narrow room, wherein a woman and six or seven roughly dressed young men were sitting at rudely appointed table.

"Earth and seast" exclaimed Mrs. Meeker. "Here's Berrie, and I'll bet that's Sutler's friend, our boarder."

"Hist along there, boys, and give the company a chauce," she commanded sharply. "Our dinner's turrible late oday."

The boys-they were in reality full rown cubs of eighteen or twentydid as they were bid with much noise.

haffing Berrie with blunt humor. Meeker read Butler's letter, which preross had handed him, and, after leliberation, remarked: "All right, we'll do the best we can for you. Mr. Norcross, but we haven't any fancy accom-

nodations.' "He don't expect any," replied Ber What he needs is a little rough-

"There's plinty of that to be had," said one of the borders, who sat below the sait. " "Tis the soft life I'm nadin'." One of the lads, Frank Meeker, a dark, intense youth of about twenty, was Berea's full consin. The others were merely hired hands, but they all eyed the new comer with disfavor. The fact that Berrie had brought him and that she seemed interested in him sided to the effect of the smart riding suit which he wore. "I'd like to roll over there."
him in the creek," muttered one of them to his neighbor.

here?"

This dislike Berrie perceived in sor degree, and to Frank she privately said: "Now, you fellows have got to treat Mr. Norcross right. He's been very sick."

Frank maliciously grinned, "Oh, we'll treat him right. We won't do a thing "Now, Frank," she warned, "If you try any of your tricks on him you'll

hear from me.' "Why all this worry on your part?" he asked keenly. "How long since you

The girl nerself did not understand the vital and almost painful interest which this young man had roused in her. He was both child and poet to her. returned her smile, though he said: "I and as she watched him trying to make feel like a selfish fool. You are friends with the men, her indignation rose against their clownish offishness.

> "I don't feel right in leaving you here," she said at last, "but I must be ridin'." And while Meeker ordered her horse brought out she walked to "I'm tremendously obliged to you,"

he said, and his voice was vibrant. deal of good, and so I stay." "You have been most kind. How can repay you?" "Oh, that's all right," she replied, in

true western fashion. "I wanted to see the folks up here, anybow. This is no jaunt at all for me." And, tooking at her powerful figure and feeling the traplike grip of her cinch hand, he knew she spoke the truth. And so she rode away, leaving her

ward to adjust himself to his new and strange surroundings as best he could, for myself. I'm just dazed and hangand with her going the whole valley darkened for the convalescent.

It was soon apparent to the eastern observer that the entire male population for thirty miles around not only unmarried man-and some who were both busbands and fathers-kept a deeply interested eye upon her daily though I'd resign and get out of the motion, and certain shameless ones openly boasted among their fellows of yet. The chance of seeing her-of their intention to win her favor, while hearing from her once in awhile-she the shy ones reveled in secret exultation over every chance meeting with her. She was the topic of every lumber cump and the shining ture of ev-

Part of this intense interest was due. happen to me, but it has." naturally, to the scarcity of desirable women, but a larger part was called out by Berea's frank freedom of manner. Her ready camaraderie was taken for carelessness, and the candid grip of her hand was often misunderstood, and yet most of the men respected her, and some feared her. After her avowed choice of Clifford Beiden they all kept aloof, for he was hot tempered lover," concluded Wayland. and formidably swift to avenge an in- forthright courtship repelled her."

At the end of a week Norcross found ilmself restiess and discontented with the Meekers. He was tired of fishing, tired of the old man's endless arguments and tired of the vulgar cowhands. The men around the mill did not interest him, and their Saturday night spree at the saloon disgusted him. The one person who piqued his curlosity was Landon, the ranger, who was stationed not far away and who could be seen occasionally riding byon a handsome black horse. There was something in his bearing, in his neat and serviceable drab uniform, which attracted the convalescent, and on Sunday morning be decided to venture a call, although Frank Meeker had said the ranger was a "grouch."

just above the road on a huge natural terrace of grassy bowlders, and the dag which fluttered from a tall staff before it could be seen for several miles, the bright sign of federal controi, the symbol of law and order, just as the saloon and the mill were signs of lawless vice and destructive greed. Around the door flowers bloomed and

kittens played. The cabin's interior pleased Waytand almost as much as the garden. It was built of pine logs neatly matched and hewed on one side,

The ranger, spurred and belted, with his cuffs turned back, was pounding the typewriter when Wayland appeared at the open door, but he rose with grave courtesy. "Come in," he said, and his voice had a pleasant inflection.

"I'm interrupting." "Nothing serious; just a letter. There's no hurry. I'm always glad of an excuse to rest from this job." He was at once keenly interested in his visitor. for he perceived in him the gentleman

and, of course, the allen. Wayland, with something of the feeling of a civilian reporting to an officer. explained his presence in the neighbor

"I've heard of you," responded the ranger, "and I've been hoping you'd look in on me. The supervisor's daughter has just written me to look after you. She said you were not very

well." Again Wayland protested that he was not a consumptive, only a student who needed mountain air, but he added, "It a very kind of Miss McFarlane to

"Ob, abe thinks of everybody!" the roung fellow declared. "She's one of the most unselfish creatures in the world."

Something in the music of this speech, and something in the look of the ranger's eyes, caused Wayland to nder if here were not still another of Berrie's subjects. He became certalu of it as the young officer went on, with pleasing frankness, and it was not long before he had conveyed to Waytend his cause for sadness. In a certain sense no man is her equ but Belden is a pretty hard type, and I believe, although I can't prove it. that he is part owner of the saloor

"It's on patented land-a so called placer claim'-experts have reported against it. McFarlane has protested against it, but nothing is done. The mili is also on deeded land, and togethe er they are a plague spot. I'm their enemy, and they know it, and they've threatened to burn me out. Of course they won't do that, but they're ready to play any kind of trick on me."

"I can well believe that, for I am getting my share of practical jokes at

"They're not a bad lot over theremly just rowdy. I suppose they're initiating you," said Landon. "I didn't come out here to be a cow-

boy," responded Norcross, "but Frank Meeker seems to be anxious to show me all the good old cowboy courtesies. On Monday he slipped a burr under my borse's saddle, and I came near to having my neck broken. Then he or some one else concealed a frog in my bed and fouled my bair brushes. In fact, I go to sleep each night in expectation of some new attack, but the air and the riding are doing me a great

Thereafter Wayland spent nearly ev ery day with the ranger, either in his cabin or riding the trail, and during these hours confidence grew until at last Landon confessed that his unrest acose from his rejection by Berrie. "She was not to blame. She's so

kind and free with every one I thought

I had a chance. I was concelted

enough to feel sorry for the other fellows, and now I can't even feel sorry ing to the ropes. She was mighty gentle about it. You know how sunny her face is. Well, she just got grave and kind o' faint voiced and said- Oh, you know what she said! She let me know there was another man. I didn't ask her who, and when I found out I lost my grip entirely. At first I country, but I couldn't do it. I can't never writes except on business for her father, but-you'll laugh-1 can't see ber signature without a tremor." He smiled, but his eyes were desperery dance to which the ranch hands ately sad. "Oh, I'm crazy! I admit often rode over long and lonely trails. It. I didn't know such a thing could

> As Wayland listened to this out pouring he wondered at the intensity veled, too, at Berrie's choice, for there | was something fine and high in Landon's worship. A college man with a It would give me something to do." mining engineer's training, he should mistake of being too precipitate as a

CHAPTER IV.

A Warning. EANWHILE his own troubles increased: Frank's dislike had grown to an impish vindictiveness, and if the old man Meeker had any knowledge of his son's deviltries he gave no sign.

"I don't know why I stay," Way land wrote to Berea. "I'm disgusted with the men up here-they're all tiresome except Landon-but I hate to slink away, and, besides, the country take a hand at the pots and pans now is glorious. I'd like to come down and then. I can't give all my time to and see you this week. May I do so? the service, but I'd like to." Please send word that I may."

whether she had received his letter or your cooking would build up my shatnot, he mounted his horse one beauti- tered system a good deal quicker than ful morning and rode away up the trail with a sense of elation, of eager joy, with intent to call upon her at he ranch as he went by

pines when Cifford Belden rode in from his ranch on Hat creek and called at Meeker's for his mail.

Frank Meeker was in the office, and | worked on without replying. as he both feared and disliked this big contemptuous young cattleman he se to work to make him jealous.

"You want to watch this one lung boarder of ours," he warned, with a "He's been writing to Berrie, and he's just gone down to see her His highfalutin ways and his fine white hands have put her on the slant?

"I'm not worrying," retorted Belden "You'd better be. I was down there he other day, and it 'peared like she ouldn't talk of anything else but Mr. Norcross, Mr. Norcross, till I was sick of his name."

An hour later Belden left the mill and set off up the trail behind Norcross, his face fallen into stern lines Frank writhed in delight. "There goes Cliff, hot under the collar, chasing Norcross. If he finds out that Berrie is

interested in him he'll just about wring that dude's neck." Meanwhile Wayland was riding fusion, "I didn't hear you ride up." through the pass with lightening beart.

his thought dwelling on the girl at the end of his journey. As he reached the McFarlane ranch it seemed deserted of men, but a faint column of smoke rising from the roof of the kitchen gave evidence of a cook, ind at his knock Berrie came to the

door with a boylsh word of frank aur prise and pleasure. She was dressed in a blue and white calico gown, with the collar turned in and the sleeves rolled up, but she seemed quite unembarrassed, and her pleasure in his com ing quite repuid him for his long and informed her that his jenious heart tiresome ride. "I've been wondering about you," she "Mr. Norcross dropped in on his way to the postoffice, and I'm collecting a

said. "I'm mighty glad to see you. How do you stand It's "You got my letter?"

"I did, and I was going to write and tell you to come down, but I've had It's a long ride over the hill." some special work to do at the office. She took the horse's rein from bim. nd together they started toward the stables

This action of stabling the horses, a perfectly innocent and natural one for her, led one of the hands, a coarse minded sneak, to watch them from a



"I've been wondering about you," she

corral. "I wonder how Cliff would like that?" he evilly remarked.

Berea was frankly pleased to see Wayland and spoke of the improvement which had taken place in him. "You're looking fine," she said as they were returning to the house. "But how do you get on with the boys?"

"Not very well," he admitted. "They seem to have it in for me. It's a constant fight." Her face grew grave. "I reckon you

got started wrong," she said at last. "They'll like you better when you get browned up and your clothes get dirty. You're a little too fancy for them just now." "I don't believe I want any more of

their company. What's the use? As you say, I've started wrong with them. and I don't see any prospect of getting of the forester's passion. He mar- right; and, besides, I like the rangers better. Landon thinks I might work into the service. I wonder if I could?

She considered a moment. go high in the service. "He made the think about that. Come into the kitchen. I'm cook today. Mother's gone to "His town."

The kitchen was clean and ample and the delicious odor of new made bread filled it with cheer. As the girl resumed her apron Wayland settled into a chair with a sigh of content. "I like this." he said aloud. "There's nothing cowgiri about you now; you're the Anglo-Saxon housewife, You might be a Michigan or Connecticut girl at this moment."

Her cheeks were ruddy with the heat and her eyes intent on her work, but she caught enough of his meaning to be pleased with it. "Oh, I have to

He boldly announced his errand, "I She did not reply, and, wondering wish you'd take me to board. I'm sure your aunt's."

She laughed, but shook her head. "You ought to be on the hills riding hard every day. What you need is the Hardly had he vanished among the high country and the air of the pines." She had read that victims of the white plague always talk in this cheerful way about themselves, and she

"If I were here-in the valley-you and I could ride together now and then, and you could show me all the trails. Why not let me come here and board? I'm going to ask your mother if I may not do so."

"Of course you can come here," she said when she saw he was in earnest "Mother will be glad to have you, although our ranch isn't a bit pretty. Perhaps father will send you out with one of the rangers as a fireguard. I'll ask him tonight."

"I wish you would. I like these foresters-what I've seen of them. I wouldn't mind serving under a man like Landon. He's fine."

Upon this pleasant conference Cliff Belden unexpectedly burst. Pushing the door open with a slam, he confronted Berry with dark and angry

"Why, Cliff, where did you come from?" she asked, rising in some con "Apparently not," he sneeringly answered. "I reckon you were too much

She tried to laugh away his black good. "That's right, I was. I'm chief cook today. Come in and sit down Mother's gone to town, and I'm play ing her part," she explained, ignoring his sullen displeasure. "Cliff, this is Mr. Norcross, who is visiting Uncle Joe. Mr. Norcross, shake hands with Mr. Belden." She made this introduction with some awkwardness, for her lover's failure to even say "Howdy" was affame, and she went on quickly,

Recognizing Belden's claims upon the girl, Wayland rose. "I must be going.

snack for him."

"Come again soon," urged Berrie. 'Father wants to see you."

"Thank you. I will look in very shortly," he replied and went out with such dignity as he could command. celing, however, very much like a dog that has been kicked over the thresh-

Closing the door behind him, Belden turned upon the girl. "What's that onsumptive 'dogie' doing here? He gared to be very much at home with you-too dern much at home!"

She was prepared for his displeasure, but not for words like these. She answered quietly: "He just dropped in on his way to town, and he's not a dogie!" She resented his tone as well

as his words. "I've heard about you taking him over to Meeker's and lending him your only slicker," he went on, "but I didn't expect to find him sittin' here like he owned you and the place. You're taking altogether too much pains with him. Can't he put his own horse out? catch you with my girl again I'll deal Do you have to go to the stable with you a whole hatful of misery. Now, him? You never did have any sense about your actions with men. You've all along been too free of your reputation, and now I'm going to take care of it for you. I won't have you nursin' this runt any longer!"

She perceived now the full measure of his base rage, and her face grew pale and set. "You're making a perfect fool of yourself, Cliff," she said, with portentous calmness.

"Am I?" he asked. "You sure are, and you'll see it yourself by and by. You've no call to get wire edged about Mr. Norcross. He's not very strong. He's just getting well of a long sickness. I knew a chill would finish him, that's why I gave him my slicker. It didn't hurt me, and maybe it saved his life. I'd do it

again if necessary." "Since when did you start a hospital for eastern tenderfeet?" he sneered, then his tone changed to one of down right command. "You want to cut this a timorous animal if I let myself be all out, I tell you! I won't have any more of it! The boys up at the mill are all talkin' about your interest in this little whelp, and I'm getting the branding iron from every one I meet. Sam saw you go into the barn with that dude, and that would have been all over the country tomorrow, if I hadn't told him I'd sew his mouth up if he said a word about it. Of course I don't think you mean anything by this cod-

"Oh, thank you," she interrupted, with flaming, quick, indignant fury. "That's mighy nice of you. I went to the barn to show Mr. Norcross where to stall his horse. I didn't know Sam was here."

dlin'.

He sneered: "No, I bet you didn't." She fired at this. "Come now! Something nasty is in your mind. Go on! What have I done? What makes you so hot?"

He began to weaken, "I don't accuse you of anything. I-but I"-

"Yes, you do-in your heart you distrust me-you just as much as said so!" He was losing his high air of command. "Never mind what I said, Berrie. I"-She was blazing now. "But I do

mind-I mind a whole lot-I didn't think it of you." she added as she realized his cheapness, his courseness, "I didn't suppose you could even think such things of me. I don't like it," she repeated, and her tone hardened, "and I guess you'd better pull out of here-for good. If you've no more faith in me than that I want you to go and never come back."

"You don't mean that!" "Yes, I do! You've shown this yel-This is the limit. I'm done with you." She stood between tears and benumb-"Don't say that, Berrie!" he pleaded, air. Is there anything in this forest trying to put his arm about her.

"Keep away from me!" She dashed his hands aside. "I hate you. I never want to see you again!" She ran into her own room and slammed the door behind her.

Belden stood for a long time with his back against the wall, the heat of his resentment utterly gone, an empty, aching place in his heart. He called her twice, but she made no answer, and so at last he mounted his horse and rode away.

Young Norcross, much as he admired Berrie, was not seeking to exchange her favor for her lover's enmity, and he rode away with an uneasy feeling of having innocently made trouble for himself as well as for a fine, true hearted girl.

"What a good friendly talk we were having," he said regretfully. "And to think she is to marry that big, scowling brute! How could she turn Laudon down for a savage like that?"

He was just leaving the outer gate when Belden came clattering up and reined his horse across the path and called out: "See here, you young skunk! You're a poor, white livered tenderfoot, and I can't bust you as I would a full grown man, but I reckon you better not ride this trail any more." "Why not?" inquired Wayland.

Beiden glared. "Because I tell you so. Your sympathy hunting game has just about run into the ground. You've worked this baby dodge about long enough. You're not so almighty sick as you put up to be, and you'd better hunt some other cure for lonesomenes or I'll just about cave your chest in.

All this was shockingly plain talk for slender young scholar to listen to, but Norcross remained calm. "I think you're unnecessarily excited," he remarked. "I have no desire to make trouble, I'm considering Miss Berea. who is too fine to be worried by us." His tone was conciliating, and the cowman, in spite of himself, responded to it. "That's why I advise you to go. She was all right till you came. Colorado's a big place, and there are plenty other fine ranges for men of your complaint. Why not try Routs county? This is certain, you can't stay in the same valley with my girl.

I serve notice of that" "You're making a prodigious ass of yourself," observed Wayland, with

"You think so, do you? Well, I'm make a jack rabbit out of you if I find you on this ranch again. You've worked on my girl in some way till she's just about quit me. I don't see how you did it, you measly little pup, but you surely have turned her against me!" His rage burst into flame as he thought of her last words. "If you were so much as half a man I'd break you in two pieces right now, but you're not. You're nothing but a dead on the hoof lunger, and there's nothing to do but run you out. So take this as your

calm contempt.

that's right!" Thereupon, with a final giance of hate in his face, he whirled his horse and galloped away, leaving Norcross dumb with resentment, intermingled with wonder.

final notice. You straddle a horse and

head east and keep a-ridin', and if I

"Truly the west is a dramatic conntry! Here I am involved in a lovers wrath and under sentence of banishment all within a month! Well, I suppose there's nothing to do but carry out Belden's orders. He's the boss " he said as he rode on. "I wonder just what happened after I left? Some thing stormy evidently. She must have given him a sharp rebuil or he wouldn't have been so furious with me. Perhaps she even broke her engagement with him. I sincerely hope she did. She's too good for him."

And so from point to point he progressed till, with fine indignation, be reached a resolution to stay and meet whatever came, "I certainly would be scared into flight by that big bonebend." he said at last

Nevertheless he felt very weak and very much depressed as he rode up the street of the little town and dismounted at the forest service building.

CHAPTER V.

The Supervisor of the Forest, Y ASH, who was alone in the government office, looked up from his work. "Come in." he called heartily. "Come in and re-

"Thank you. I'd like to do so. And

may I use your desk? I have a letter to write." "Make yourself at home. Take any desk you like. The men are all out on

"You're very kind," replied Wayland, gratefully. There was something reassuring in this greeting and in the many signs of skill and scientific reading which the place displayed. It was like a bit of Washington in the midst of a careless, slovenly, lawless mountain town, and Norcross took his seat and wrote his letter with a sense of

proprietorship, "I'm getting up an enthusiasm for the service just from hearing Alec Belden rave against it," he said a few minutes later, as he looked up from

bis letter. Nash grinned. "How did you like

Meeker?" "He's a good man, but he has his peculiarities. Belden is your real enemy. He is blue with malignity-so are most of the cowmen I met up there. I wish I could do something for the service. low streak before, and I'm tired of it. I'm a thoroughly up to date analytical chemist and a passable mining engineer, and my doctor says that for a ing anger now, and he was scared. year at least I must work in the open

> service for a weakling like me? Nash considered. "I think we can employ you, but you'll have to go on as fire guard or something like that for the first year. You see, the work is getting to be more and more technical each year. As a matter of fact"-here he lowered his voice a little-"McFarlane is one of the old guard and will have to give way. He don't know a thing about forestry and is too old to earn. His girl knows more about it than he does. She helps him out on

office work too." Wayland wondered a little at the freedom of expression on the part of Nash, but said, "If he runs his office as he runs his ranch he surely is condemned to go."

"Well, you get Berrie to take up your case and you're all right. She has the say about who goes on the force in this forest."

It was late in the afternoon before Wayland started bank to Meeker's with intent to repack his belongings lend eave the ranch for good. He had de cided not to call at McFarlane's, a decision which came not so much from fear of Clifford Belden as from a desire to shield Berea from further trouble, but as he was passing the gate the girl rose from behind a clump of willows and called to him: "Oh, Mr.

Norcross! Wait a moment!" He drew rein and, slipping from his horse, approached her. "What is it. Miss Berrie?" he asked, with wondering politeness.

(Continued next Saturday.)

Builds New House on Ranch Lais Bros. are making some sub stantial improvements on their big erected a new house and are now busily engaged in building fences. Joe Lais, who is looking after the ranch, was in the city Monday attending to business matters.—Silverton Appeal.

